

The Politics of Salvation: Theodore of Stoudios on Martyrdom (*Martyrion*) and Speaking Out (*Parrhesia*)

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Theodore of Stoudios was a pivotal figure within the late-eighth- and early-ninth-century Byzantine church, both as a reforming monastic leader and vigorous church activist. He is perhaps best known for his conservative outlook in a time of great changes.¹ The revival of cenobitic monasticism owed much to his initiative, for it was at the Stoudios and its parent monastery, the Sakkoudion, that a reformed cenobitic way of life based on ancient models took root and ultimately flourished.² The abbot and his monks also played a leading part in a number of serious religious controversies of the age, most notably the Moechian conflict (795–797), the Joseph affair (806–811), and the second phase of Iconoclasm (815–843). This series of struggles, each of which pitted the abbot's community against church and state officials as well as numerous monks from other communities, demonstrated Theodore's skills as church politician, theologian, strategist, and organizer. At his death in 826 the abbot stood at the head of a veritable "church in exile," comprised of iconodule confessors from all walks of life whose coming and staying together was in great part the product of his own efforts. This "church" survived in one form or another until 843, when icons were restored and Theodore was memorialized for his crucial role in the iconodule resistance.³

¹The bibliography on the Stoudios and Theodore is extensive. For the period up to the turn of this century, see A. Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor, Ispovednik i Igumen Studijskij*, 2 vols. (Odessa, 1913; Kiev, 1914), I, iv–xvi. For the period to 1968, see P. Henry, "Theodore of Studios: Byzantine Churchman" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), 326–33. Since 1968, a few additional titles are worthy of mention: A. Borrelly, "Les Studites," in *Monachisme d'Orient et d'Occident: l'Orient monastique; quelques jalons au cours du premier millénaire* (Sénanque, 1984), 79–100; V. Bozidav, *St. Theodore the Studite* (Toronto, 1985); Ch. Frazee, "Saint Theodore of Studios and Ninth Century Monasticism in Constantinople," *Studia monastica* 23.1 (1981), 27–58; J. Leroy, *Studitisches Mönchtum: Spiritualität und Lebensform* (Graz-Vienna-Cologne, 1969); J. Meyendorff, "L'image du Christ d'après Théodore Studite," in *Synthronon*, Bibliothèque des cahiers archéologiques, no. 2 (Paris, 1968), 115–17; E. Patlagean, "Les Stoudites, l'empereur et Rome: figure byzantine d'un monachisme réformateur," in *Bisanzio Roma e l'Italia nell'alto medioevo, 3–9 aprile 1986*, I (Spoleto, 1988), 429–65.

²J. Leroy, "La réforme studite," *OCA* 153 (1958), 181–215. Cf. also D. Papachryssanthou, "La vie monastique dans les campagnes byzantines du VIII^e au XI^e siècles: Ermitages, groupes, communautés," *Byzantion* 43 (1973), 158–80.

³On the Moechian controversy, see Henry, "Theodore: Byzantine Churchman," 38–46 and 92–109; Th. Korres, "Τὸ ζήτημα τοῦ Δευτέρου Γάμου τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου VI" (Ph.D. diss., University of Thessaloniki, 1975); P. Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI. Die Legitimisation einer fremden und der Versuch einer eigenen Herrschaft* (Munich, 1975), 203–95 passim and 376–80. On the Joseph affair, see Henry, "Theodore: Byzantine Churchman," 50–67; Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, 605–703; P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*

The abbot's role in the Iconoclast and the Moechian and Joseph controversies has received considerable scholarly attention, in part because Theodore often did the unexpected. His relations with the Roman papacy during these controversies has been a source of particular concern, a matter that has generated much discussion but little consensus.⁴ Other problems, such as why he sought a commanding role in the controversies at all, have prompted inquiries into the abbot's personal interactions with contemporary churchmen and his ecclesiology.⁵ Equally intriguing but less studied are a host of human questions relating to the controversies, such as how Theodore developed and sustained viable resistance movements despite the pressures of imperial persecution. Though critical to the ultimate success or failure of Theodore's protests, and thus arguably to the course of Eastern Church history, this aspect of his career has been taken largely for granted.⁶

Part of the abbot's task was practical and defensive. The daily challenge of coordinating and sustaining his dispersed and often embattled supporters was enormous,⁷ yet Theodore embraced this aspect of the resistance with remarkable *savoir-faire*.⁸ Among the ways in which his community of supporters held themselves together was through a reliable communications network. Letters, books, treatises, material goods, and verbal messages and commands traveled from one supporter to the next by way of Stoudite monks acting as couriers. The network was seemingly quite secure, partly due to the discretion with which Theodore supervised his corps of messengers, but also owing to a system of ciphers that he assigned to important figures within the protest movements, thus protecting their identities.⁹

The abbot's letters, which are replete with such ciphers, were the principal item car-

(Oxford, 1959), 87–100; P. E. Niavis, *The Reign of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus I (AD 802–811)* (Athens, 1987), 136–59. On both of these controversies, see P. E. Niavis, “Ἰωσήφ Ἡγούμενος τῆς μονῆς τῶν Καθαρῶν (†825),” *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 4 (1990), 85–98. For the Iconoclast controversy, see Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*, and W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988). The quotation is from P. Alexander, “Religious Persecution and Resistance in the Byzantine Empire of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Methods and Justifications,” *Speculum* 52.2 (1977), 247. Note that I use the term “Joseph affair” instead of “second Moechian conflict.”

⁴The more recent studies include, J. Gill, “St. Theodore the Studite against the Papacy,” *ByzF* 1 (1966), 115–23; Henry, “Theodore: Byzantine Churchman,” 172–74, 226–50; J. Gouillard, “L'Église d'Orient et la primauté romaine au temps de l'iconoclisme,” *Istina* 21 (1976), 46–54; Patlagean, “Les Stoudites,” 437–43. P. Hatlie, “Theodore of Stoudios, Pope Leo III and the Joseph Affair (808–812),” *OCF* 61.2 (1995), 407–23; P. Karlin-Hayter, “A Byzantine Politician Monk: Saint Theodore Studite,” *JÖB* 44 (1994), 225–29.

⁵Cf. Alexander, *Patriarch Nicephorus*; Henry, “Theodore: Byzantine Churchman”; Karlin-Hayter, “Saint Theodore,” 217–32 *passim*.

⁶A useful, though brief, treatment of Stoudite resistance is to be found in Alexander, “Religious Persecution,” 246–62.

⁷Modern scholars generally agree that the religious persecutions of this age, while sporadically violent, were not on the whole widespread or harsh. See especially Alexander, “Religious Persecution,” 242–46. For Iconoclasm in particular, see P. Schreiner, “Legende und Wirklichkeit in der Darstellung des byzantinischen Bilderstreites,” *Saeculum* 27.2 (1976), 165–79 *passim*.

⁸Good treatments of the resistance organization set up by Theodore include, A. Gardner, *Theodore of Studium* (London, 1905), 121–23, 174–84; Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, 387–88, 626, 883–91; Alexander, “Religious Persecution,” 246–52.

⁹A. Tougaard, “La persécution iconoclaste d'après la correspondance de Saint Théodore Studite,” *Revue des questions historiques* 50 (1891), 84–85; Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, 671, 763; Alexander, “Religious Persecution,” 247–48.

ried by the messengers, numbering well over a thousand from exile by the time of his death.¹⁰ Evidently some of Theodore's nearly four hundred sermons were carried as well.¹¹ In these sources we find evidence of several specific measures Theodore adopted with a view toward strengthening the community in exile. These included urging his supporters to uphold strict moral and disciplinary standards so as not to grow susceptible to outside influence, especially that of their enemies;¹² encouraging and applauding various forms of service (διακονία), good works (εὐεργεσία), assistance (βοήθεια) and humanitarianism (φιλανθρωπία) that might benefit those struggling in exile;¹³ warning his supporters against any mingling or collaboration with the enemy, especially through the taking of communion;¹⁴ finally, advocating strict terms of penance for all those who had previously cooperated with their opponents but now wished to join the protests.¹⁵

While much of Theodore's energy and attention was turned to these and other internal affairs of the community in exile, he also took some positive steps toward advancing the ideological interests of the protest movements outright. It is fairly certain that pictorial imagery served as a tool of Stoudite iconophile propagandists.¹⁶ But this was only one part of a larger scheme of promotion, propaganda, and counter-propaganda super-

¹⁰*Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, ed. G. Fatouros, CFHB 31 (Berlin, 1991); references to this edition are hereafter cited as *Letters*, followed by the number of the letter given in the edition, its probable date (in parentheses), and its page number(s). Fatouros has published 557 letters securely attributed to Theodore, though he himself admits (p. 41*, n. 5) that this number may include some redundancies. Earlier estimates put the total number at 551 to 553: Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil (A.D. 802–867)* (London, 1912), 451–52; Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, II, 52–53, esp. n. 3; R. Devreese, "Une lettre de s. Théodore Studite," *AB* 68 (1950), 44–47; Henry, "Theodore: Byzantine Churchman," 19–23. Estimates about the number of letters in the original collection range from 1,124 to 1,146. Cf. B. Melioranskii, *Perechen' vizantijskikh gramot i pisem*, fasc. 1, in *Zapiski Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk*, ser. 8, *Po Istoriko-filologičeskomu Otdeleniju* 4.5 (St. Petersburg, 1899), 12–42, esp. 14–15, 42; Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, II, 52–99, esp. 68–85.

¹¹A modern critical edition of the sermons (or catecheses), which would have included 386 sermons, was undertaken but never completed by Julien Leroy (hereafter cited as *Great Catechesis*, Leroy). For the moment they are found in two separate collections. The earliest chronologically is the three-book *Great Catechesis*, comprising 252 sermons. Parts of it are printed in *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae*, ed. G. Cozza-Luzi, vol. 9.2 (Rome, 1888), 1–217, and vol. 10.1 (Rome, 1905), 1–159 (hereafter cited as *NPB*). A good edition of book 2 is Τοῦ Ὁσίου Θεοδώρου τοῦ Στουδίτου Μεγάλη Κατηχήσεις, βιβλίον δεύτερον, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1904; repr., Thessaloniki, 1987) (hereafter cited as *Great Catechesis*, PK). The balance is still to be found in manuscript collections. The later collection is the *Small Catechesis*, comprising 134 sermons and found in a good edition, *Sancti Patris Nostri et Confessoris Theodori Studitis Praepositi Parva Catechesis*, ed. E. Auvray (Paris, 1891; repr., Thessaloniki, 1984) (hereafter cited as *Small Catechesis*, using the reprinted edition). My thanks to Fr. Canart at the Bibliotheca Vaticana for permission to consult Leroy's manuscript.

¹²For the Joseph controversy, see, e.g., *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 111, p. 817. For Iconoclasm, cf. *Letters*, 130 (d. 815), 247; 166 (d. 816), 287–88; 375 (d. 815–818), 505–6; *Small Catechesis*, no. 102 (d. 821–826), p. 258.

¹³For the Joseph controversy, see Theodore's eulogy to Plato of Sakkoudion, PG 99, cols. 840C–841A; *Letters*, 54 (d. 809–811), 159–60. For Iconoclasm, cf. *ibid.*, 78 (d. 815–818), 199; 98 (815–818), 218; 143 (d. 815–818), 259; 264 (d. 815–818), 392; 300 (d. 815–818), 438–39; 436 (d. 821), 613–14.

¹⁴For the Joseph controversy, cf. *Letters*, 21 (d. 808), 54–57; 40 (d. 809–811), 118–19; *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 111, p. 822. For Iconoclasm, cf. *Letters*, 31 (d. 816), 302; 294 (d. 816–818), 433–34; *Small Catechesis*, no. 51 (821–826), pp. 140–41.

¹⁵For Iconoclasm, *Letters*, 225 (d. 816), 356–58; 340 (d. 816–818), 480–81; 393 (d. 817–818), 546–48; 484 (d. 821–826), 710–11.

¹⁶Cf. A. Cutler, "The Byzantine Psalter: Before and after Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm, Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. J. Herrin and A. Bryer (Birmingham, U.K., 1977), 92–102, esp. 102; R. Cormack, "The Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm," *ibid.*, 40–41.

vised by the abbot during the various conflicts, ranging from effective letter writing to the production and distribution of theological treatises and other literary works. The abbot was himself a key actor in this war over words and ideas, most notably through his broad and much-copied correspondence.¹⁷

Theodore's invocations to *martyrion* (μαρτύριον) and *parrhesia* (παρρησία) would seem to fit squarely into this promotional strategy. Rooted in the early Christian era (and beyond), both concepts described actions befitting the faithful Christian living under persecution. These were the provocative and often fateful actions undertaken by early Christian confessors to make a public expression of their opposition to pagan authorities, seal their bond with Christ, and obtain eternal salvation. Theodore readily identified the mission of himself and his supporters with that of the early Christian confessors, including calling for *martyrion* and *parrhesia* in response to the various conflicts. But how he and his supporters actually understood and applied these mandates within the context of the real circumstances confronting them is not entirely clear.¹⁸ Were the protests of Theodore and his supporters truly modeled after the core expressions of dissent by the early Christian confessors, or had the intervening centuries and Theodore himself redefined the actions mandated by *martyrion* and *parrhesia*?¹⁹ There is no doubt that both mandates were integral to the protest movements, but just what role they played in the day-to-day workings of the protests invites further investigation.

THE CALL TO MARTYRDOM

Still early in his monastic career, Theodore formulated the idea that people of his era could match the glorious deeds of the martyrs. The most common way was through a martyrdom of the conscience (μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως), which consisted of voluntarily committing oneself to a life of ascetical purity and moral righteousness. This kind of martyrdom was open to everyone, the abbot acknowledged, including monks, clergy, and laity. But since his own concerns were predominantly monastic, Theodore explained the way of martyrdom for monks in much greater detail. Absolute renunciation (ὑποταγή) and perfect obedience (ὑπακοή) were fundamental aims of the monastic life, and, if achieved, monks would be able to equal the glory of legendary martyr-monks such as Anthony, Pachomios, Hilarion, Sabas, and others.²⁰ The alternative road to the glory of

¹⁷Alexander, "Religious Persecution," 248–49. Theodore's brother Joseph also took an active part in these writing campaigns, particularly during the Iconoclast controversy, when he produced a series of iconophile poems. On Joseph's poems, see *Letters*, 333 (d. 818), 474. For similar endeavors, see *ibid.*, 26 (d. 808), 72; 49 (d. 810), 139–40; 374 (d. 817–818), 505.

¹⁸Alexander, "Religious Persecution," 248–52 *passim*, has touched briefly on the role of *parrhesia* and *martyrion*—together with *enstasis* (constancy) and *homologia* (confession)—in the various conflicts.

¹⁹On the Roman background, see now G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge-New York, 1995); on changes to the concept of martyrdom from antiquity through the early Christian period, see A. Droge and J. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco, 1992). For a fresh look at the early Christian age, cf. A. Pettersen, "'To Flee or Not to Flee': An Assessment of Athanasius's *De Fuga Sua*," in *Persecution and Toleration, Studies in Church History* 21, ed. W. J. Sheils (1984), 29–43; E. Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1.1 (1993), 73–83.

²⁰On the martyrdom of conscience, cf., e.g., *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 30, p. 140; *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 78, pp. 371–72; *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 2, pp. 11–12; *ibid.*, no. 95, pp. 684–85; *ibid.*, no. 99, pp. 715–16. On

the martyrs was by means of the martyrdom by blood and confession (μαρτύριον διὰ αἱματος/μαρτύριον τῆς ὁμολογίας). Recognizing the exceptional nature of this form of martyrdom, Theodore generally associated it with the acts of the fathers of old, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Stephen, and others. However, he also supposed the martyrdom by blood to be a natural corollary of the martyrdom of conscience, at least in the case of monks. Since the monastic life was already dedicated to following in the footsteps of Christ, he argued, the more drastic act of following Him by means of suffering or even death should, if necessary, be readily accomplished.²¹

Theodore first began to issue the call for a martyrdom by blood during the Moechian controversy. Sources preserving the orders and instructions he gave to his supporters are relatively sparse from this episode, and the voice he adopted in these sources proved to be less strident than that of later years. Still, there is little doubt that the call to martyrdom was an essential component of his response to the controversy.

Curiously, Theodore spent part of his time in exile reading a compendium of the acts of the martyrs. Not only did the stories make his heart sink, he related, but they also convinced him that nothing could be sweeter than suffering for Christ.²² Reflecting on the stories, the abbot doubted whether he himself had suffered enough to be deemed a true sufferer for Christ. On the other hand, he made clear that his supporters were vigorously engaged in the work of the martyrs. According to Theodore, the almighty Judge of the universe looked upon the monk and former abbot of Sakkoudion, Plato, as a true servant (πιστὸς δοῦλος), guardian of His commands (τηρητὴς τῶν ἐντολῶν αὐτοῦ), and confessor (ὁμολογητής).²³ Plato accepted the same dishonors (ἄτιμίας), and curses (ὕβρεις) that Christ had, and he was the good shepherd as Christ was.²⁴ Furthermore, in Theodore's view, Plato's sufferings were in imitation of Christ (χριστομίμητα πάθη), his

the possibility of such a martyrdom for all, see *ibid.*, no. 99, pp. 715–16. On the potential for achieving equal honors with ancient monks, cf., e.g., *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 17 (= *NPB* 10.1, no. 79, pp. 12–14); *ibid.*, no. 33, bk. 1, pp. 149–51; *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 35, p. 159; *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 72 (= *NPB* 9.2, no. 1, pp. 2–3). Needless to say, Theodore does not put limits on the virtues and exertions advisable for achieving martyrdom. In addition to renunciation and obedience, he also mentions humility, faith, good works, etc.

On the development of the concept of monastic martyrdom, see A. Phytakes, “Μαρτύριον καὶ μονάχικος βίος,” *Theologia* (1948); E. E. Malone, “The Monk and the Martyr,” *Studia Anselmiana* 38 (1956), 201–28.

²¹This notion is of course not unique to Theodore. For his distinction between the martyrdom of conscience or will and that by blood or confession, see, e.g., *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 95, pp. 684–85; *ibid.*, no. 99, pp. 715–16; *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 3, no. 36 (= *NPB* 9.2, no. 66, pp. 183–84). On the ancient martyrs, see *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 73, pp. 352–53. On the prospect of monks undertaking a martyrdom by blood, see *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 65, p. 314; *ibid.*, bk. 3, no. 40, p. 2.

On the development of the theology of martyrdom by blood within the early church, in particular its distinction from mere “witness” or “confession,” see esp. N. Brox, *Zeuge und Martyren: Untersuchungen zur frühchristlichen Zeugnis-Terminologie*, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, no. 5 (Munich, 1961); W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford, 1965); E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York, 1979), 81–101; Th. Baumeister, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyriums*, Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie, no. 45 (Münster, 1980).

The various shades in the meanings of *martyria* (μαρτυρία)/*martyrion* (μαρτύριον)/*martyrein* (μαρτυρεῖν)/*martyr* (μάρτυς) are to be found in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), 828–33.

²²*Letters*, 2 (d. 797), 10. Theodore calls it a reading (ἐντευξίς) of the acts of the martyrs, which had been copied in twelve parts (ἐν δώδεκα δέλτοις).

²³*Ibid.*, 10. For other references to Plato as confessor, see *ibid.*, 1 (d. 797), 6.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 2 (d. 797), 10.

person was in communion with the saints (κοινωνὸς τῶν ἁγίων) and his spirit was with the martyrs (τὸ πνεῦμά σου μετὰ μαρτύρων). The abbot noted that others, too, had joined Plato in his noble cause. Like him, they had all chosen to travel the road of suffering and death for the defense of God's commandments.²⁵

John the Baptist was an important exemplar of these new martyrs as they rallied against the alleged lawlessness of Emperor Constantine VI and his supporters, the protagonists of the Moechian conflict. The reasoning behind Theodore's choice of the martyr John is abundantly clear. Since John had admonished Herod for his "adulterous" possession of Herodias, the abbot considered it right that he and others voice criticism against Constantine, who he alleged had committed "adultery" with a certain Theodote.²⁶ Furthermore, the suffering of his uncle Plato was manifestly in imitation of the suffering of the Baptist, though slightly less extreme. It might have actually equaled that of John, Theodore speculated at a later date, if only Constantine had been more true to his prototype, more willing to do what Herod had done:

But he [Constantine] did not cut off his [Plato's] head, because he did not want the athlete by choice to end as a martyr (μάρτυς), as the one before [John] had when he spoke out. Despite his wishes, however, he [Constantine] turned him [Plato] into a confessor for Christ.²⁷

Plato had thus taken the road of John the Baptist, even though his martyrdom had not ended in death. In all likelihood the abbot also put forth the names of other martyrs or saints for his other supporters to follow.²⁸ Another late source described the exertions of his mother Theoktiste during the persecutions, then concluded that she was "in truth the new Natalia and one in spirit (ὁμόζηλος) with Priscilla."²⁹

During the Joseph affair, Theodore raised the call to martyrdom once again. On this occasion, however, his language was somewhat heightened and the list of martyr-exemplars expanded. Already early in the conflict, Theodore braced his monks for the dangers ahead by sketching the sufferings of Jesus and the martyrs in vivid detail and comparing their road to the one traveled by his own monks.³⁰ Later, when persecutions did finally descend upon them and others, one case among those persecuted was deserving of special attention. The monk and abbot Euthymios, who reportedly received severe treatment for his opposition, was hailed by Theodore as a martyr whose beating in "Pilate's court" (πραιτώριον Πιλατικόν) rendered him an imitator of Christ (χριστομίμητος).³¹

The abbot also drew more specific associations between his own supporters and historical martyrs. Countering the charge that he represented only an isolated minority, Theodore retorted that he and his followers were nevertheless in good company, for the

²⁵ Ibid., 3 (d. 797), 11; 1 (d. 797) 6; 3 (d. 797) 13.

²⁶ Ibid., 5 (d. 796), 19–20; 22 (d. 808), 59.

²⁷ Eulogy of Plato, PG 99, col. 832A–B.

²⁸ Theodore's extant letters from the first exile are limited to three, all of which were written to Plato. But Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, 100, has determined that Theodore wrote at least six additional letters that have not survived. Moreover, the abbot had occasion to meet with numerous other sympathizers in person (see, e.g., his letter to Plato, in *Letters*, 3 (d. 797), 13–14).

²⁹ Eulogy of his mother, PG 99, cols. 896B–897A, esp. 896C.

³⁰ *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 111, pp. 819–21, esp. 822, line 19.

³¹ On the case of Euthymios, see *Letters*, 51 (d. 810–811), 151–52.

martyr Stephen had been opposed by a majority of people as well.³² Theodore seems also to have come under fire from his opponents for claiming that the actions of John the Baptist (when he confronted Herod) and John Chrysostom (in his reproach of the empress Eudoxia) both constituted noble precedents for the Stoudite protests. His critics apparently maintained that the specific episodes in these saints' lives on which the abbot pinned his hopes were not so noble at all. What the Baptist had done was unnecessary, they reportedly stated, while Chrysostom's actions were downright mistaken.³³ Dismissing such criticism as a kind of blasphemy, however, the abbot continued to press the idea that he and his supporters were champions of truth and justice in imitation of the two Johns. Though Chrysostom was hardly a martyr in the classic sense (as the Baptist was), still he had traveled the martyr's road into exile during the episode Theodore had in mind.³⁴

Iconoclasm, the third major controversy involving Theodore and his followers, served as the greatest and most passionate drama yet of the new Christian martyrs. Between its inception in 815 and the abbot's death in 826, Theodore counted hundreds of people among the martyrs for their having preserved, despite persecution, a fidelity to the icons of Christ and the saints. There were a few freshly cut martyrs, the abbot observed, who were then considered to be enshrined within the ranks of the saints, while many other confessors relived and recreated the glory of the martyrs and saints of old.³⁵

The most famous martyr of the time was the Stoudite monk, Thaddaios. Theodore honored him as, among other things, a lamb of Christ (τὸ ἀρνίον τοῦ Χριστοῦ), a martyr of Christ (ὁ μάρτυς τοῦ Χριστοῦ), a newly called martyr (ὁ νεοκλήτος μάρτυς), the Stoudios' own martyr (ὁ ἡμέτερος μάρτυς), and someone who was unsurpassed by angels and humans (ἀνυπέρβλητος ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις).³⁶ While Theodore gave Thaddaios the highest honors among those of his time, he did not hesitate to designate the exertions and suffering of numerous others as acts of martyrdom. For her sufferings, the patrician woman Irene was called "a senator's wife walking among martyrs" (συγκλητικὴ ἐν μάρτυσιν) and a new martyr (νέαν σε μάρτυρα).³⁷ Gregoras, a layman, was deemed a multi-martyr (πολυμάρτυς) by Theodore. For not only had this man confessed to icon worship, but he had also protected and encouraged other martyr-confessors.³⁸ The confessions and suffering of several monks and clergy were also heralded as equal to the acts of the

³² Ibid., 48 (d. 810–811), 137–38.

³³ Ibid., 555 (d. 809–811), 851–52. The reference to Chrysostom concerns his reproach of the empress Eudoxia for divesting a widow of her land. Chrysostom was subsequently exiled. The episode is discussed in K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1982), 72.

³⁴ For Theodore's continued reference to the Baptist and Chrysostom parallels, see *Letters*, 33 (d. 809), 91–92. Other references to the saints are found in *ibid.*, 28 (d. 808), 77–78, while the Baptist example is discussed alone in *ibid.*, 22 (d. 808), 58–59; 34 (d. 809), 96.

³⁵ For comparisons between iconodules and ancient martyrs in the hagiography of the Iconoclast era, see I. Ševčenko, "Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period," in *Iconoclasm* (as above, note 16), esp. 129.

³⁶ *Letters*, 186 (d. 816–817), 308–9; 301 (d. 817–818), 440–41; 381 (d. 819), 521. Thaddaios was particularly hailed for being someone of low birth who had achieved great things. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 186 (d. 816–817), 308; *Small Catechesis*, no. 43, pp. 121–22.

³⁷ *Letters*, 156 (d. 815–818), 276–77.

³⁸ Ibid., 191 (d. 816–817), 315.

martyrs of old, and others were said to walk in the footsteps of the saints and claim the Jerusalem on high as their home city.³⁹

The times were no less ripe, Theodore supposed, for the appearance of imitators of specific saints and martyrs. The greatest martyr of all, Christ Himself, had many following in his footsteps. Furthermore, Theodore urged Pope Paschal to imitate Christ, in particular the Christ who received letters from King Abgar and responded accordingly.⁴⁰ Euthymios, bishop of Sardis, was characterized as being one in suffering with the apostle Paul and Athanasios of Alexandria.⁴¹ Theodore's own exertions compared with those of St. Cyprian.⁴² Addressing various nuns who were martyrs for their fidelity to icons, Theodore remarked that their deeds were as noble as those of Thekla, Febronia, Eugenia and others of the days of old.⁴³ By the same token, the priest Gregory was to be numbered with "the great Gregories," since he alone among the clergy in Constantinople had chosen to suffer for and preach the truth.⁴⁴

When all was said and done, what was the purpose of all this witnessing in the context of the Iconoclast movement as well as the two previous controversies? The personal salvation of each of the new martyrs was certainly foremost in Theodore's mind. At one point during the Iconoclast controversy, some of his followers came to doubt whether the new policy was truly wrong, since there had been no immediate sign of God's disapproval. Responding to their apprehensions, he recounted the trials of Job, Peter, Paul, and other martyrs who suffered torments without question. "It is impossible for well-meaning servants to ask 'until when?'" he added. "For the Unsleeping Eye has His own accounts of what is right."⁴⁵ Besides picturing martyrdom as a requisite for individual salvation, however, the abbot also promoted the view that the deeds of the new martyrs served an important social function.⁴⁶ Specifically, their public testimony was thought to be a means of reinforcing and preserving values and traditions that they perceived as at risk.

Theodore comprehended the social process in three ways. First, he supposed that the martyrdoms of his day served as a visible and enduring refutation of false doctrines and values, as well as an indictment against those upholding them. The more his new martyrs endured their sufferings without lapsing, or conversely undertook a new round of suffering after a previous lapse, the more the newly introduced concepts and rules would be impeded. Thus the monk Arkadios, who had been relegated to working as a weaver in

³⁹Ibid., 223 (d. 816), 352–53; 245 (d. 816–818), 377–78; 355 (d. 818), 489–90; 408 (818–819), 567; 175 (d. 817), 296.

⁴⁰Ibid., 271 (d. 817), 401. Theodore also introduced the Abgar figure in *ibid.*, 33 (d. 809), 94.

⁴¹Ibid., 74 (d. 816), 195.

⁴²Ibid., 120 (d. 815–816), 239. Theodore reckoned that, like Cyprian, he was in the position to circulate letters of encouragement to those who would become martyrs.

⁴³Ibid., 397 (d. 815–819), 552; 244 (d. 816), 376.

⁴⁴Ibid., 163 (d. 816), 284. For other exhortations to imitate the saints, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 157 (d. 815–816), 278–79; 236 (d. 816), 370. For those imitating Christ, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 262 (d. 817), 390–91; 380 (d. 818), 511.

⁴⁵Ibid., 392 (d. 818), 543–44. For similar sentiments, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 381 (d. 819), 523–24; 410 (d. 819), 571–72.

⁴⁶For similar views emerging from the early church, see Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom" (as above, note 19), 76.

the emperor's service, actually became a kind of liability to his new boss. As Theodore explained:

[Your sufferings] are the things of saints. But then it is also true that they [the iconoclasts], though not wanting to, exhibit you to the world as a true servant of the emperor of the universe, a proof (ἔνδειγμα) of the testimony of God, a refutation (ἐλεγχος) of impiety.⁴⁷

Nor was Arkadios alone, since others bearing witness were seen to produce similar effects. The public rebuttal was particularly potent, according to Theodore, when people who had stumbled or fallen earlier then returned to the struggle.⁴⁸

Second, Theodore's martyrs served as a powerful example (παράδειγμα/ὑποδείγμα) and a source of strength to others who observed their actions. Their suffering not only emulated the examples of ancient saints and martyrs, therefore, but it also created a blueprint of saintly conduct for those of their own generation. During the Joseph controversy, for example, God set forth Theodore's own monks as examples of truth and obedience to the whole world, monks and laity alike.⁴⁹ Similarly, the Iconoclast controversy gave birth to many new examples of saintly virtue. These included Irene the patrician, whose struggles were significant for winning her a place in heaven but also, as the abbot informed her, "so that you might strengthen and save many others by your own example (τῷ οικείῳ υποδείγματι)."⁵⁰ Theodore supposed that many other iconodules were having the same effect. The exiled bishops John, Michael, and Basil served as steady examples of strength, for instance, while the abbot of Medikion, who had lapsed early in the conflict by following poor examples, later regained his courage and became in his own right a great example (μέγιστον δείγμα) of conversion and satisfaction to others.⁵¹

Third and finally, according to the abbot, the new martyrs pointed the way to the future. Subtly twisting the martyr legend, Theodore pictured himself and his followers as a kind of tissue connecting the old world with a future, better world. If the future world needed to be that of the Final Judgment, his followers would in any case be exonerated. But if, on the other hand, one earthly kingdom was to be succeeded by another, the new martyrs or their disciples would be there to re-educate and rebuild it.⁵²

In the end, Theodore pictures martyrdom as an appropriate and effective response to the major controversies of his lifetime because it contained some of the damage incurred in those controversies: at the very least, a few individuals would reject the views of their worldly leaders and earn their salvation by doing so; in the best scenario, the choice of martyrdom by greater numbers of people would result in the creation of an underground company of the saved who would endure until better times, preserving in

⁴⁷*Letters*, 390 (d. 817–818), 541, lines 21–23. For the opinion that continued resistance would ultimately make the opponents lose heart, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 234 (d. 815–818), 368–69.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 201 (d. 816–818), 323–24; 320 (d. 818), 463; 354 (d. 817–818), 488–89. Theodore explains the importance of a full recovery by those who had fallen in *ibid.*, 432 (d. 821–826), 606–7.

⁴⁹*Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 109, pp. 804–5.

⁵⁰*Letters*, 156 (d. 815–818), 277.

⁵¹See, respectively, *ibid.*, 58 (d. 821), 169; 267 (d. 817), 395. For other examples, see, *ibid.*, 166 (d. 816), 287; 347 (d. 817–818), 485.

⁵²Two texts from the Iconoclast controversy aptly illustrate this point. In the first, Theodore argues that bearing witness to and preserving icons is crucial for humankind, since a physical obliteration of icons would be historically irreversible. For this, see *Letters*, 301 (d. 817–818), 441. In the second text, found in *ibid.*, 286 (d. 816–818), 426, the abbot looks to the future when the martyrs of his own age will be commemorated.

themselves the seeds of a renaissance. Such images of the act of martyrdom fixed the attention and energy of his sympathizers on former glories and future goals rather than present realities, but the challenges of the resistance movement and the needs of Theodore's supporters lent themselves to other images as well. For those, let us now turn to the abbot's invocation to *parrhesia*.

THE CALL FOR SPEAKING OUT

Speaking liberally or out of turn—*parrhesia/parrhesiazesthai* (παρρησιάζεσθαι)—was normally looked upon with suspicion by Theodore. For example, the abbot considered it an outright vice for his own monks to express themselves freely. Grouped with a number of other carnal activities and likened to commerce with the devil, *parrhesia* was thought to be a source of disruption in the life of the monastery because it corrupted relations between brothers and undermined monastic obedience.⁵³ On the eve of his very first controversy, Theodore also acknowledged that *parrhesia* was an unusual and generally unwelcome practice in the world outside the monastery. After investigating the matter, he noted that periodic instances of people speaking out against their leaders, or at least worldly authorities, were attested to in the Old and New Testaments. On the other hand, such conduct was admissible only when there was an urgent necessity, and even then only under certain specific conditions.⁵⁴

Each of the three controversies involving Theodore and his supporters met and ultimately surpassed the criteria for *parrhesia*, in the abbot's view. Indeed the necessary conditions for his speaking out against superiors were established early in each episode, and once the conflict over principles in each instance gave way to open hostility and persecutions, there was little reason left to withhold *parrhesia*.⁵⁵ Not only speaking out, but also manifesting disrespect and disagreement in public through actions and ritual was henceforth urged by Theodore.⁵⁶

During the Moechian controversy, Theodore applauded the conduct of his uncle Plato in this regard. Though in prison and repeatedly pressed to change his views, Plato nonetheless showed "courage beyond hope and *parrhesia* beyond expectation."⁵⁷ The Joseph affair raised the need for *parrhesia* yet a second time. Still early in the conflict, Theo-

⁵³ *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 33, p. 151; *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 48 (= *NPB* 9.2, no. 39, pp. 110–11); *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 61, p. 294; *ibid.*, bk. 1, no. 68 (= *NPB* 9.2, no. 58, p. 163); *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 26, p. 183; *ibid.*, no. 55, p. 391; *ibid.*, no. 113, p. 838. On the other hand, Theodore looks forward to *parrhesia* with God in heaven in *ibid.*, no. 83, p. 587. The various shades in the meaning of *parrhesia/parrhesiazesthai* are to be found in Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1044–46. Cf. also G. J. M. Bartelink, "Quelques observations sur *parresia* dans la littérature paléo-chrétienne," in *Graecitas et Latinitas Christianorum Primeva*, suppl. fasc. 3.1 (Nijmegen, 1970), 7–9; *idem*, "Parresia dans les oeuvres de Jean Chrysostome," *StP* 16 (1985), 441–48; P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, Wisc., 1992), 61–70 and *passim*. Theodore's references to *parrhesia* within the context of the monastery clearly were not about free speech only, but also reflected the sense of "impudence" and "familiarity" noted by Lampe (p. 1044, I.B).

⁵⁴ *Letters*, 4 (d. 795–796), 17–18; 5 (d. 796), 19–20. The latter letter is discussed in-depth by Henry, "Theodore: Byzantine Churchman," 101–3.

⁵⁵ For the Moechian conflict, *Letters*, 4 (d. 795–796), 17. For the Joseph affair, *Letters*, 21 (d. 808), 55–56 (Joseph). For Iconoclasm, Michael of Stoudios, *Life of Theodore* (= *BHG*³ 1754), in PG 99, cols. 281B–284C.

⁵⁶ For brief comments on Theodore's view of *parrhesia*, see Alexander, "Religious Persecution," 248.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, 3 (d. 797), 12.

dore expressed dismay that a rampant fear of persecution had created a situation in which “there are many who have closed ranks around us and agree with us, but even though they are pious by night they are not able to speak freely by the light of day.”⁵⁸ When the abbot finally found supporters who were immune to the heavy political climate, he passionately urged them to bear the message against Joseph and his supporters, his direct opponents in conflict. They needed to manifest their opposition, as he told a certain abbot Theophilos, “for Chrysostom denounced not only heretics, but also those who communed with them, and he did so with a grand and great voice.”⁵⁹

The Iconoclast controversy continued and amplified the abbot’s call to *parrhesia*. Emperor Leo V, the main force behind Iconoclast reforms, had reportedly put strict limits on the opposition’s freedom to speak out. The only ones who enjoyed *parrhesia*, according to the abbot, were those controlled by the emperor, and they were bent on deceiving the populace about Iconoclast doctrines. More unfortunate still, he reported, prominent abbots with reputations for knowledge and integrity deferred to the emperor’s wishes by remaining completely silent.⁶⁰ Theodore reacted to this repressive situation with a broad call to *parrhesia* on the part of all his sympathizers. Some were scolded for remaining silent out of fear or weakness, and many others were congratulated for their *parrhesia* or urged to undertake it.⁶¹ The audience for Theodore’s call to *parrhesia* broadened considerably during the reign of the emperor Michael II, who had relaxed some of the limits on free speech. Taking advantage of the improved climate, the abbot even urged prominent imperial officials, among others, to take open steps in support of icons.⁶²

Theodore probably had the concept of *parrhesia* in mind also when he solicited help from people residing outside Byzantine-controlled territories. Letters were dispatched to foreign dignitaries during each of the three controversies, and while the abbot did not request *parrhesia* per se, he did urge interventions of a similar nature.⁶³ Most notable are Theodore’s communications with the Roman papacy, which were directly aimed at having a powerful new voice enter the largely intramural debates in Byzantium. His biographer informs us that the abbot won some recognition from Pope Leo III during the Moechian affair. Leo reportedly urged him not to surrender his protest, “being that it was equal in honor to that of [John] the divine Baptist.”⁶⁴ During the Joseph conflict, Theodore twice contacted the same pope. His message was that Leo must step forward to teach, as Christ had, and involve himself in the Byzantine church’s affairs just as an

⁵⁸ Ibid., 31 (d. 808), 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 39 (d. 809–811), 113.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 134 (d. 816), 251–52; 197 (d. 816–817), 320; 149 (d. 816), 266–67.

⁶¹ Ibid., 75 (d. 816–818), 196; 181 (d. 816), 303–4; 420 (d. 821), 589. For those scolded, *ibid.*, 445 (d. 821–826), 627–28; 448 (d. 821–826), 633.

⁶² On the relaxation of regulations under Michael, cf. *ibid.*, 418 (d. 821), 584–85; 424 (d. 821), 593–94; 433 (d. 821), 608–9. See also Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, 863–64; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival* (as above, note 3), 231. For exhortations after 821, cf. *Small Catechesis*, no. 15 (d. 821–826), pp. 49–50; *Letters*, 425 (d. 821), 594–95; 523 (d. 824–826), 780. For similar requests, though not referred to as *parrhesia*, see also *ibid.*, 424 (d. 821), 594; 426 (d. 821), 596–97.

⁶³ Less notable are the letters that solicited prayers, albeit with an understanding that other forms of assistance from the recipients could not be expected. For examples during the Moechian conflict, see *Letters*, 555 (d. 809–811), 851–52. For Iconoclasm, cf. *ibid.*, 276 (d. 818), 408–9; 277 (d. 818), 415; 278 (d. 818), 418.

⁶⁴ Life of Theodore, PG 99, col. 256c.

earlier Leo—Leo I (440–461)—had done during the Eutychian conflict.⁶⁵ The Iconoclast controversy called for the involvement of the papacy once again, though on this occasion Theodore's requests grew especially passionate. Pope Paschal was urged, among other things, to "Scare the heretical beasts with the whip of your words," and "Let it be heard that those who have dared these things synodically and anathematized the Holy fathers are themselves anathematized by you."⁶⁶ Much to Theodore's satisfaction, the pope did deliver the reproach to the Iconoclast emperors that he had asked for.⁶⁷

Ultimately Theodore supposed that the difficult times he and his supporters lived through called for *parrhesia* nearly as much as they called for martyrdom. The two forms of protest were not, of course, mutually exclusive. As in his exhortations to martyrdom, the abbot made it clear that everyone—from farmer to imperial servant—needed to exhibit *parrhesia* or face a stern judgment from God.⁶⁸ Furthermore, his supporters were urged both to bear witness *and* show *parrhesia*, or better yet to demonstrate their association with the martyrs *through* an expression of *parrhesia*.⁶⁹ Beyond these obvious coincidences, however, Theodore viewed *parrhesia* as a relatively distinct activity in its own right, serving purposes within the protest movement that were quite different from those of *martyrion*. If undertaking the latter was mainly for the purpose of preserving and exemplifying the truth, the goal of *parrhesia* was rather to spread the truth as clearly and broadly as possible while also publicly challenging the opposition.

Why was *parrhesia* so necessary? Why did the more private act of martyrdom need to be supplemented with this openly contentious gesture? Theodore answered these questions in two basic ways. First, *parrhesia* compensated for the loss of direction and leadership that worldly authorities had once provided. Assuming the role of teacher and leader at a time when the world's religious and political leaders had fallen was considered to be an immensely important task. For without the *parrhesia* of the new leaders, the abbot argued, many innocent people would be lost. His words to Abbot Theophilos made this point:

And if Your Firmness is not sturdy, then who will be saved? And if someone who spoke out (ὁ παρρησιασάμενος) as a saint with God's power before the culmination of heresy should withdraw after the heresy is arrived . . . then how will a layman, his wife, his children and everyone else ever be disdainful? Although a humble brother and son, therefore I admonish you not to be silent so that we not become a screaming Sodom.⁷⁰

The second purpose of *parrhesia* was less a matter of teaching something than it was purely a matter of survival. Specifically, *parrhesia* kept free and true discourse from being totally muzzled. It was about holding the line against the force of imperial propaganda—"their incessant tongue-wagging, in public and private, in writing and in things not writ-

⁶⁵ *Letters*, 33 (809), 93. On Leo's involvement in the Eutychian controversy, see J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, N.Y., 1989), esp. 153–58, 172–73. On the outcome of Theodore's letters, see *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 74, p. 167.

⁶⁶ *Letters*, 271 (d. 817), 401; 272 (d. 817), 402–3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 274 (d. 818), 405; 406 (d. 819), 563; 407 (d. 819), 564–65. For more on this pope's actions, see Dobroklonskij, *Prepodobnyj Feodor*, I, pp. 813–17, 838–39; Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire* (as above, note 10), 115–18; Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 219, 221, 234.

⁶⁸ *Letters*, 425 (d. 821), 594–95.

⁶⁹ Eulogy of Plato, PG 99, col. 832A–B.

⁷⁰ *Letters*, 39 (d. 809–811), 113–14, lines 70–76. For a similar message, see *ibid.*, 149 (d. 816), 266.

ten”—or else facing a day when “we will not even be able to sit at home and discuss the things that need to be discussed.”⁷¹

Ultimately, then, the call to *parrhesia* represented a bid to keep the message of Theodore and his supporters alive and well. If it succeeded, in his view, there was always the possibility of reinforcing weak and embattled spirits as well as bringing the message of the protests to new ears. If the *parrhesia* found no outlets, on the other hand, the voice of protest would be held captive to the circle of new martyrs or, worse, eventually hushed altogether.⁷²

MARTYRDOM ANSWERED

“Bring your holy struggles to the fore, oh crown of fathers, and embrace whatever else will come as well: for people in the church of Christ still live in a time of martyrdom (ἔτι γὰρ καὶ πρὸς μαρτυρίου). May you not be diverted from your beautiful confession.” This was Theodore’s advice to a certain John, bishop of Sardis, during the opening months of the Iconoclast controversy. It was an exhortation to martyrdom in an age that the abbot presumed to be ripe for martyrs. For John, who had already been mishandled by iconoclasts, the only thing missing was that “you were not placed on the cross, because these are not the times. Yet you are a cross-bearer, since you were taken away and abused and ridiculed by the evil-doers.”⁷³

The themes evoked in these passages occur repeatedly in the abbot’s writings from exile, most often during the Iconoclast years but also periodically during the Moechian and Joseph controversies. He made it clear on a number of occasions that a time of martyrdom—i.e., a time for suffering on behalf of the faith—was now at hand.⁷⁴ He also returned frequently to the idea that his followers could and should travel a similar road to that which the blood martyrs of old had taken. Their struggles and sufferings might not be identical to those of the first martyrs, according to the abbot, but the new martyrs would still be redeemed in equal measure and their actions would count equally as much to the mission of the earthly church.⁷⁵

But what did Theodore actually mean by “martyrdom”? How were his supporters supposed to answer his call? If exorbitant suffering and death were no longer the specific criteria, then what kinds of conduct and what degrees of suffering did he ascribe to the “martyr” of his times?

In at least some instances Theodore did mean the kind of sufferings that ended in a

⁷¹ *Small Catechesis*, no. 15 (d. 821–826), pp. 49–50. Cf. also, *Letters*, 108 (d. 815–816), 226; 117 (d. 815–816), 236; 92 (d. 815–818?), 213; 524 (d. 821–826), 781–82.

⁷² *Letters*, 430 (d. 821), 603. About the success of Theodore’s *parrhesia* during the Moechian controversy, see *Life of Theodore*, PG 99, cols. 253D–258D.

⁷³ *Letters*, 157 (d. 815–816), 278 (for quotations).

⁷⁴ *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 26 (d. 800?), p. 120; *Great Catechesis*, PK, no. 116 (d. 809–810?), pp. 864–65; *Letters*, 157 (d. 815–816), 278; 164 (d. 815–818), 286.

⁷⁵ Cf., e.g., eulogy of Plato, PG 99, col. 832A; *Great Catechesis*, Leroy, bk. 1, no. 78 (d. 800?), p. 371; *Letters*, 355 (d. 818), 489–90. At times during the Iconoclast controversy Theodore toyed with the idea that a martyrdom for the sake of the icon could be construed as somehow equal to those of old, inasmuch as both were directly on behalf of Christ himself. This was because a martyrdom for the icon was actually for its prototype, thereby making iconodule martyrdoms much like that of the Maccabees and John the Baptist. For this, cf. *ibid.*, 301 (d. 817–818), 440–42; 381 (d. 818), 523–24; 415 (d. 820), 579–80.

confessor's death. This was regarded as the most laudable form of martyrdom possible, even if the death was unintended and unforeseen. During the Moechian conflict, his uncle Plato had apparently come close to a martyrdom of this kind, the abbot reported proudly, except that the emperor Constantine had backed down.⁷⁶ In the subsequent Joseph and Iconoclast controversies, Theodore did not hesitate to picture the martyr's proper role in this light, stressing the positive value in a confessor's supreme sacrifice. When the first real martyr-by-death appeared—the monk Thaddaios, during the Iconoclast controversy—the abbot's immediate reaction was one of evident shock, yet he still used the occasion to solemnize and reaffirm the value of this radical form of confession. Hailing Thaddaios as a “newly called martyr” (ὁ νεοκλήτος μάρτυς), Theodore urged his fellow Stoudite brothers to follow in the new martyr's footsteps, striving without fear for the same victory and glory.⁷⁷ Another notable martyrdom-by-death during the Iconoclast conflict was that of Theophanes, the renowned abbot of Sigriane. Already an elderly man when the persecutions began, his road to martyrdom included abduction, imprisonment, exile, maltreatment, and, finally, death. Theodore suggested that Theophanes' end had been hastened, if not directly caused, by these persecutions. At any rate, his martyrdom served as a source of strength and a powerful example of faith to many others struggling within the church.⁷⁸

Long before Theophanes' death, Theodore had written to him personally and praised him for undergoing serious hardship on behalf of his iconophile confession. He hailed his fellow abbot as a martyr on this occasion, too, thus suggesting that martyrdom was not exclusively a matter of suffering until death.⁷⁹ A similar message went out to many of the abbot's other supporters and sympathizers over the years. Various kinds of physical suffering were applauded and encouraged as the way of martyrdom, even when there was no death or prospect of death involved. Theodore often associated beatings and whippings with martyrdom. For example, the monks Dorotheos and Jacob were part of the group of Stoudites who were beaten along with the monk Thaddaios. Afterwards Theodore hailed Thaddaios a martyr in view of his death, while the others earned the same honor for having endured a beating without surrendering their confession.⁸⁰ His depiction of the latter as martyrs in this instance was evidently not tied to the fact that they had shared sufferings with Thaddaios, for a number of other beating victims were honored in the very same way. The martyrdom was rather in the experience of the beating itself.⁸¹

There were still other kinds of physical suffering that qualified as martyrdom, too. Whether his supporters faced exile, dispossession, or prison terms, Theodore was usually quick to point out that the victim had embarked on the road of the martyrs, while by the same token those who were in the midst of suffering, or about to suffer, were exhorted to endure the hardship willingly and steadfastly in the name of the martyrs. Thus the patrician woman Irene was deemed a martyr because she was “persecuted, homeless,

⁷⁶ See above, p. 268.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., *Letters*, 186 (d. 816–817), 308–9; 194 (d. 817), 317–18; 198 (d. 817), 321.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 323 (d. 818), 465–66; 333 (d. 818), 474–75.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 291 (d. 816–818), 430.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 188 (d. 817), 311–12; 189 (d. 817), 313.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 246 (d. 816), 378; 376 (d. 817–818), 506–7; 306 (d. 816–818), 449.

without a city, detained and forever subjected to danger.”⁸² A number of other cases approximated Irene’s, notably those of the above mentioned bishop of Sardis, John, and a certain abbot, Basil. John had been condemned in public, ridiculed, roughly handled, exiled and imprisoned, thereby earning, in Theodore’s estimation, the title of martyr.⁸³ As for Basil, his seizure, beating and imprisonment ranked him with the martyrs.⁸⁴

Beginning in the year 818, with the Iconoclast controversy settling into its third year and the most forceful persecutions now passed, Theodore’s understanding of martyrdom took a subtle but decided turn. His stress on martyrdom by means of physical trials and suffering—perhaps even leading to death—was not entirely abandoned, but a newly articulated vision of the martyr’s role in the controversy began to form alongside and merge into these prior notions. Henceforth martyrdom would also be closely associated with the quality of patient endurance (ὕπομονή), on the one hand, and the practice of monastic asceticism, on the other.

Theodore made a strong case for patient endurance in a letter to his own monks, dated to the year 818 or 819. After noting that their hardships were similar to those endured by the apostle Paul and their embattled support for icons comparable to the martyrdoms of the Maccabees and John the Baptist, he observed that the contemporary martyr was “an unimpeachable confessor” (μάρτυς ἀπαράγραπτος), in particular someone who was ready to endure many years of hardship.⁸⁵ Theodore returned to this axiom repeatedly in his letters and sermons from 818 until his death in 826. On a few occasions he attributed a supposed victory over the iconoclasts, such as a prison release, to a supporter’s patient endurance.⁸⁶ Victories of this sort showed the tangible rewards of this form of martyrdom, and Theodore welcomed them. They were further proof that martyrdom lay not so much in the momentous victory over adversity as in the patient endurance over years of adversity.⁸⁷

The view that monastic asceticism was a kind of martyrdom needed much less explanation than Theodore’s ideas on patience. It was a venerable, mainstream concept already, which he himself had employed repeatedly during his earlier years as an abbot in residence.⁸⁸ From 818 onward Theodore not only revived this concept, but more importantly he placed it squarely within the context of the Iconoclast controversy, stressing the inherent worth and efficacy of asceticism in response to the reigning climate of protests and persecutions. The latter message went out to numerous monks and nuns, particularly those who were no longer exposed to direct persecution.⁸⁹

⁸²Ibid., 156 (d. 815–16), 276. On the identification of Irene, whose sufferings at any rate could hardly have been so great as the abbot described, see D. Turner, “The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813–820),” *JÖB* 40 (1990), 185–86.

⁸³*Letters*, 157 (d. 815–816), 278–79; 451 (d. 821–826), 638.

⁸⁴Ibid., 317 (d. 816–818), 460–61. See also, e.g., *ibid.*, 142 (d. 815–816), 257–58; 175 (d. 817), 296–97; 210 (d. 816–817), 332; 231 (d. 816), 544–45; 390 (d. 818–819), 541.

⁸⁵Ibid., 381 (d. 818–819), 523–24.

⁸⁶The iconodule bishops John, Michael, and Basil, for instance, had demonstrated their martyrdom and won their freedom through God-inspired patience (ἐνθεος ὑπομονή). See, *Letters*, 58 (d. 821), 169; 354 (d. 818), 488–89.

⁸⁷Ibid., 301 (d. 817–818), 440–41; 351 (d. 817–818), 487; 397 (d. 818–820), 552; *Small Catechesis*, no. 19 (d. 821–826), pp. 58–59.

⁸⁸See above, note 20.

⁸⁹*Letters*, 354 (d. 818), 489; 349 (d. 818), 486; 410 (d. 819), 571–72.

There were specific reasons why monastic martyrdom was an advisable, even indispensable, vocation during these troubled political times. Ascetic discipline essentially put monks and nuns on guard, according to the abbot. It was their weapon against the ignorance and intimidation of the world's leaders, strengthening them to withstand all obstacles and bear off the crown of justice.⁹⁰ An added and somewhat related consideration seemed to recommend monastic martyrdom, too, this one reflecting more directly the goals of the iconodules' protest movement itself. Monks needed to demonstrate their open opposition to present evils, Theodore claimed, but they also needed to live an upright life. This strategy was in imitation of the saints of old, who "prevailed over the civilized world—bringing light into the darkness, salting the insipid and enduring whip and rod—not with their preaching of the Gospel (κήρυγμα) alone, but also with their impregnable way of life (τῷ ἀλήπτῳ βίῳ)."⁹¹

The way of life Theodore mainly envisioned was the cenobitic life, or at least those elements of it that could be sustained within the context of the Iconoclast persecutions.⁹² Cenobitism served as the basic framework in which monks pursued the monastic martyrdom described by the abbot, but it was now a sometimes beleaguered institution. Its basic structure, the community, had been severely shaken in those monasteries where there had been mass exiles of monks and nuns, most notably those associated with Theodore's iconodule crusade. The abbot touted the exiles of his supporters all the same, as we have seen, deeming these and other of their sufferings a kind of martyrdom. Even monks who had to endure such hardships at the expense of following their ascetic regime were still applauded and encouraged.⁹³

It is interesting to see how long it took for Theodore to grasp the fundamental problem—or better, dilemma—that the latter position created for the monks and nuns under his care who were possible targets for persecution. If martyrdom was in the suffering, then why should they not expose themselves readily to suffering? But if it was in the ascesis, was it not right to regroup, shun suffering, and cultivate cenobitic discipline in relative isolation from danger? Though Theodore's writings give no indication that he understood matters in just these terms, there is still reason to suppose that he eventually perceived this basic dilemma in the lives of some of his fellow monks and nuns. Indeed, on a number of occasions he had to confront the problem—to be a martyr by blood or martyr of conscience—head on.

Two of these incidents, both of which took place sometime after 818, are of special

⁹⁰*Small Catechesis*, no. 109 (d. 821–826), p. 277; *ibid.*, no. 102 (d. 821–826), p. 258. For a warning against undertaking too severe a discipline, since it might increase a confessor's vulnerability to Iconoclast pressures, see *Letters*, 412 (d. 819), 575–76.

⁹¹The quote is from *Small Catechesis*, no. 15 (d. 821–826), p. 50. For a similar statement, see *Letters*, 410 (d. 819), 571–72.

⁹²See especially *Small Catechesis*, no. 38 (d. 821–826), pp. 108–10. For the suggestion that cenobitic principles were, in particular, a source of strength and stability during the controversy, cf. *Letters*, 387 (d. 818–819), 537–38; 472 (d. 823–825), 678–79; 512 (d. 823), 761–62.

⁹³Comparing the conduct of his monks with that of contemporary hermits—followers of the hermit Ioannikios, in particular—Theodore remarked, "Let Father Ioannikios and his fellow monks have the desert and the mountains, but you take your obedience and your monk's cell. He has not suffered persecution in this age, but you were persecuted on behalf of justice. He was not imprisoned, but you were imprisoned on account of the Lord. He was not beaten, but you were beaten for Christ. Your deeds are so much superior to theirs." For this, see *Small Catechesis*, no. 38 (d. 821–826), pp. 109–10.

interest. In the first, a certain nun Maria wrote Theodore inquiring whether she could quit wearing her habit, specifically so as to avoid persecution. Somewhat anguished at his inability to answer her definitively, he replied:

Concerning the wearing of worldly clothes on the outside as camouflage (ὕποκριτικὴ κοσμοφόρησις) within a limited period of time and context because of the persecution, this may be found among the saints for some necessary reason. But forever, never. So I don't know what to say. If I were inclined to rule out the concealment, you might say that you would not bear the martyrdom; for you would be drawn into torture. And if again I might agree to it, I would not have the scriptures (γραφικὴ μαρτυρία) behind me.⁹⁴

In the end the abbot considered it better that Maria shed her habit and enlist herself among the “hidden monks” (κρυπτομόναχοι), practicing her vocation in peace instead of risking the trials of persecution.

The second incident involved a Stoudite monk named Symeon, whom Theodore had scolded some months earlier for being overly active in his service to others.⁹⁵ Heeding his abbot's orders, Symeon had apparently settled down with a number of other Stoudite monks in hiding, but he still questioned the rightness of such a posture at a time when the road to real martyrdom, to his mind, still stood open. Questioning Theodore on the matter prompted this reply:

Be strong, my beloved son, be excellent, lead your brothers, encourage them, demonstrate the things of truth and incite them to acts of martyrdom (παράθηγε εἰς μαρτύριον). It is the time for such things; but it is also right that you should be in hiding. For throwing oneself into temptation—as you asked to be informed—is the following: that is, the moving on one's own initiative to the extent that one exposes oneself to one's murderers. Now if the holy Gordios, just as also all other martyrs, were self-elected (αὐτόκλητοι), your way would thus be demanded: for when no one spoke out, as it turned out, the impiety flared up even more violently. But in those days they fathomed God with a pure heart, and it was by Him that they were spurred on. This was also the case when the great Prodomos boldly denounced Herod. But right now there are many people who, by God's grace, are resisting and embracing martyrdom. So it is not right to throw yourself into danger.⁹⁶

The abbot's reply to Symeon was somewhat stronger than that he delivered to Maria, perhaps because it needed to be so. Symeon appears to have been simply more restless and zealous than the others. At any rate, Theodore again affirmed the value of the monastic martyrdom and again indicated, in the name of martyrdom, that his followers need not expose themselves to the persecutions. As if to console the monk, however, he left open the possibility that a martyrdom by suffering might be demanded at some date in the future.⁹⁷

Theodore's responses to these two cases have been quoted at length so as to show precisely how the abbot found his way during those moments when, as it would seem,

⁹⁴ *Letters*, 396 (d. 818–819), 551, lines 14–19.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 250 (d. 816), 383; 349 (d. 818), 486.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 388 (d. 818–819), 538–39, lines 6–17. The martyr Gordios is eulogized by Basil the Great, in PG 31, cols. 489–507. See also *BHG*³ 703–703g.

⁹⁷ This statement comes in *Letters*, 250 (d. 816), 382, which similarly reminds Symeon of the need to practice monastic discipline. For a more explicit statement about the efficacy of saving oneself for future suffering, see *ibid.*, 361 (d. 817–818?), 495.

the logic of his ideas about the protest movement in general, and martyrdom in particular, required clarification. At the level of the protests, the question was seemingly whether a policy of open confrontation or noble retreat was politically wiser. In terms of martyrdom, it was a matter of what was more rewarding and salvific for his followers at a time of persecution, the martyrdom of blood and suffering or the martyrdom of conscience. In these few instances from the years after 818, the abbot leaned heavily toward the idea that a martyrdom of conscience was a sufficient, even noble, response to the persecutions on the part of some of his supporters. This was not, however, an idea that he endorsed consistently over the years, including during the Moechian and Joseph conflicts as well as during many moments of the Iconoclast controversy. To other supporters at other times he strongly affirmed the value of suffering for the faith.

SPEAKING OUT ANSWERED

Amos 5:13 was a biblical passage to be reckoned with. Brought to Theodore's attention during the early years of Iconoclasm by a young and industrious Stoudite monk named John, it reads as follows: "At that time, since it is an evil time, the prudent person will stay quiet." John was suspicious of the passage because it seemed to recommend that people remain silent and quiescent in the face of persecutions, a message that was decidedly out of step with the teachings of his abbot, or so he thought. Theodore responded to it as follows:

It doesn't seem to me to be twisted and wrong. For a time for us to speak (καιρὸς τοῦ λαλεῖν) and a time for silence (καιρὸς σιωπῆς) has been defined by the God-inspired scripture (Eccl. 3:7) for the occasions when we are looking out for and administering (οἰκονομοῦντων) the word of truth in accordance with the demands of the circumstances. Were we not ordered to avoid giving dogs what is holy and throwing pearls to the pigs (Matt. 7:6)? Ponder the God-bearers, even those who were proficient with words: when it was useless (or even harmful) to speak, they established the principle by means of silence; yet whenever the time for sowing was fruitful and not cluttered with stones, they returned it to its place in the light. At a glance, this is how I judge the proposition you put forth.⁹⁸

The abbot had never himself used Amos 5:13, and the equanimity he showed here was rather short-lived. His only citation of the passage came several years later, at which time he proceeded to cast doubt on its relevance for the circumstances he and his monks confronted. Amos 5:13 applied to those who feared persecutions, he suggested, not to those who were strong in the faith and ready to prove it.⁹⁹

If Amos 5:13 was not an entirely suitable text for the times, there were a number of other scriptural passages at Theodore's disposal that came much closer. Over the years the abbot turned to Psalms 39:10 and Psalms 118:46 in support of the view that silence was wrong and speaking out right during times of trouble, while one of his most quoted passages was Hebrews 10:38: "If they shrink back, My soul takes no pleasure in them."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Ibid., 219 (d. 815–818), 341, lines 15–24.

⁹⁹*Small Catechesis*, no. 74 (d. 821–826), p. 193.

¹⁰⁰For Ps. 39:10 and Ps. 118:46, see *Letters*, 149 (d. 816), 266. For Heb. 10:38 (cf. Hab. 2, 4), see *ibid.*, 382 (d. 819), 527; 426 (d. 821), 595; 542 (d. 826), 818.

To these testimonies he added others, specifically episodes from the lives of such illustrious figures as John the Baptist, the apostle Paul, and John Chrysostom. His contention was that none of these saints had retreated in silence when the church was in need, so neither should people of the current generation. "Silence carries a fearful judgment," Theodore noted late in the Iconoclast controversy, "and the same thing is true for the abject dumbness which is now shown toward those of the heresy."¹⁰¹

But what did avoiding the judgment of silence entail? It was one thing to break down the walls of silence, but how were Theodore's followers to go about achieving the holy and edifying *parrhesia*?

The abbot was perhaps most enthusiastic about the form of *parrhesia* that John the Baptist had exhibited—an abrupt and boldly delivered retort against adversaries and impious officials. He applauded this action when he witnessed it among his own supporters and was himself always ready to perform it, despite the beatings and other punishments that were likely to (and often did) follow.¹⁰² Before the first year of Iconoclasm had expired, the "Ten," a group of ten Stoudite monks, had responded with *parrhesia* to the interrogations of Anthony, the bishop of Syllaëum. They were subsequently whipped for the act, Theodore reported, but that one hour of pain had won them eternal salvation and a reputation: "Sion heard and was overjoyed, and the daughters of Byzantium exulted, both East and West blessing you, the ten crown-bearers of God."¹⁰³ The abbot also praised others for exhibiting such conduct and suffering like consequences.¹⁰⁴

Not all of his supporters were faced with such a demanding situation as that of the "Ten," nor did Theodore truly expect and encourage everyone to exhibit the *parrhesia* of the Baptist. For a great many of his supporters, the kind of *parrhesia* the abbot envisioned was rather one of teaching, preaching and exerting influence within a more protected circle of friends and sympathizers. It was undertaken at some risk, of course, since a supporter's message might reach the wrong audience, yet it was still not nearly the bold and reckless *parrhesia* of the likes of the Baptist. During the Joseph affair, Theodore urged the abbot Theophilos to embrace *parrhesia* of this sort. What he called for was a strong expression of opposition to Joseph and his supporters, comparable in his mind to the *parrhesia* of John Chrysostom. Theophilos needed both to distance himself from the conflict and provide positive leadership to his circle of monks and lay acquaintances.¹⁰⁵ During the initial years of the Iconoclast controversy, while there was still an official imperial ban on iconodule propaganda, the abbot again rallied his supporters to *parrhesia* of this sort, including the Stoudite monks Stephen and Naukratios, Ignatios the bishop of Miletus, Abbot Athanasios of Paulopetrion, and others.¹⁰⁶

The years after 821 saw a considerable change in Iconoclast policy. Not only had the

¹⁰¹The quote is from *ibid.*, 542 (d. 826), 818–19. For a similar statement, cf. *ibid.*, 119 (d. 815), 237–38; 256 (d. 815–818), 386.

¹⁰²On Theodore's own outspokenness, see *ibid.*, 112 (d. 816), 231; 382 (d. 819), 526–27. See also, *Life of Theodore*, PG 99, cols. 282b–284c, 288d, 296b–c.

¹⁰³*Letters*, 181 (d. 815–816), 97.303–4.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 214 (d. 815–816), 336–37; 307 (d. 817–818), 450; 234 (d. 815–818), 368–69.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 39 (d. 809–811), 113–14.

¹⁰⁶See, respectively, *ibid.*, 173 (d. 816), 294; 75 (d. 816), 196; 169 (d. 816), 290; 236 (d. 816), 370; 149 (d. 816), 266–67.

persecutions stopped, but iconodule freedoms of speech and expression had been greatly relaxed. The gates of *parrhesia* had been reopened, as Theodore put it.¹⁰⁷ The abbot capitalized on the new mood immediately, taking his own *parrhesia* to the highest levels of government. He admonished the *logothete* Pantoleon for his silence as follows:

It is a commandment of the Lord not to be silent at times when faith is endangered. . . . Therefore, when there is a principle of faith concerned, is it ever possible to say: "You don't mean me? I am a priest!" Never! "But I am a ruler!" No chance! "I am a soldier!" Not here either! "What if I am a farmer?" Impossible here too! "A poor man?" Maybe, but only because he is seeking his daily bread. There is no way or means to say things like those above. The rocks are clamoring, and are you silent and indifferent?¹⁰⁸

The abbot pursued a similarly forceful line of persuasion with a number of other prominent officials. With striking frankness he bid them all to support and defend icon worship openly, in particular before the emperor. The freer political climate had presented Theodore with new opportunities to speak out and exercise influence, and he expected those who had been all too silent in the past to seize the moment as well.¹⁰⁹

Judging from the admonition served upon the *logothete* Pantoleon, the years after 821 offered few excuses for shrinking back in silence. With the gates of *parrhesia* now held open, Theodore and his supporters could speak their minds with considerably less anxiety than in years past. The fears and apprehension attached to speaking out had reportedly run deep during the years when stricter and more prohibitive restraints were in place, including the first years of Iconoclasm, but also at least as far back as the Joseph affair.¹¹⁰ To some extent the abbot resigned himself to the risks and obstacles placed upon free speech during these earlier years. While he himself refused to cease "speaking and teaching," he allowed that some of his supporters might be better off not taking unnecessary risks, or at least minimizing the risks of being caught.¹¹¹ There was one type of speech that Theodore would not concede, however, namely the speech that he and his fellow supporters maintained between and among themselves. The roads of communication between supporters was a virtual lifeline of the various protest movements, as he saw it, and the words of encouragement, direction, and information represented the veritable lifeblood.¹¹²

On this aspect of *parrhesia* Theodore confronted a dilemma, however, in some sense comparable to the one he faced in regard to martyrdom. Just as he worried about the negative implications of certain acts of martyrdom on the monastic discipline of his supporters,¹¹³ so too did *parrhesia* pose threats. Keeping the lines of communication and

¹⁰⁷See above, note 62.

¹⁰⁸*Letters*, 425 (d. 821), 595, lines 12–20.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 419 (d. 821), 586–87; 420 (d. 821), 588–89; 424 (d. 821), 593–94; 426 (d. 821), 597–98.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 39 (d. 810), 113–14; 553 (d. 809–811), 846–47; 119 (d. 815), 237–38; 144 (d. 816), 259–60.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 169 (d. 816), 290; 236 (d. 816), 370. Theodore wondered whether Athanasios had perhaps gone too far and risked exposing himself when he wrote to the abbot of Photeinoudiou, a lapsus, trying to win him back to icon worship. In the case of Hypatios, he noted that the monk needed to measure his speech with counsel (συμβουλία). See also, *ibid.*, 119 (d. 815–816), 237–38, where the abbot affirms the need for reaching out to Stoudite brothers as well as other iconodules, yet at the same time cautions against inviting the attention of imperial authorities.

¹¹²See above, pp. 274–75.

¹¹³See above, pp. 278–79.

cooperation open was of considerable strategic value for the resistance, but it did run the risk of fostering a climate in which there was too much intimacy and familiarity (*parrhesia*) between supporters, particularly between monks and lay people, nuns or family members. In its most basic form, the choice for Theodore was either to allow his monks to associate freely and perhaps form relationships with other supporters, thereby possibly strengthening his whole community of supporters in the face of the persecutions, or to insist that his monks remain an order apart, even avoiding contacts with fellow supporters from outside their ranks.

The Iconoclast controversy saw this dilemma arise repeatedly, and there is very little evidence to suggest that Theodore viewed the personal associations between his monks and other supporters in a positive light. Though monks might be forced into temporary contact with people outside their ranks because of the persecutions, Theodore supposed, they were ordered not to make a habit of it:

The persecution should not be the occasion for perdition, but salvation. Nor is the necessity so great as to drive one to live together with a woman, even though among the fathers the circumstances forced the blameless Athanasios to live seven years close to [in the house of?] a virgin, not to mention that this or that saint was assisted by a woman. But now, when there is freedom in the cities and countryside, there is no reason for the hospitality of women by someone whose way of life is single. So you who are moved by the confession and persecution for Christ, don't enter into bitter conversations with women against Christ. First perhaps, there is a psalm together; then perhaps comes dining together and living together, devouring the woman of the house with your eye and at the same time being devoured into oblivion? Men must flee women as though there were a fire, and women must do the same from men. And if it is necessary that a coming together take place, let it happen only to the extent that necessity and some advantage demand it.¹¹⁴

When Theodore announced this principle sometime after 821, the worst years of the Iconoclast persecutions were now over and most of his monks had already regrouped into independent communities. Thus there was less need for face-to-face interactions between monks and other supporters, notably women. Curiously, however, the abbot's instructions after 821 were little different from those beforehand, when he also discouraged monks from interacting with non-monks. Emergency situations aside, he consistently urged his monks to shun contact with others and to guard themselves against the sin of excessive familiarity, whether it be among themselves or with others.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, these rules regarding the personal contacts allowed for monks during the protests merely reinforced an idea that has been suggested above: Theodore's attempts to maintain integrity within monastic ranks were as much a part of his strategic response to the conflicts as was his encouragement of more active expressions of protest and resistance. Both policies found a place in his conception of the protest movements.¹¹⁶ Yet striking this balance between active resistance on the part of all of his supporters and the

¹¹⁴*Letters*, 503 (d. 821–826), 744–45, lines 29–40. For a similar position, see *ibid.*, 64 (d. 821–826?), 176–78; *Small Catechesis*, no. 75 (d. 821–826), 195–96.

¹¹⁵*Letters*, 107 (d. 815–816), 225; 165 (d. 816–817), 286–87; 247 (d. 816), 379–80; 368 (d. 818), 500; 373 (d. 815–818), 504.

¹¹⁶See pp. 279–80.

protection of monastic discipline certainly had its tensions and particular consequences. At certain moments the abbot affirmed “the need for us to look after one another by virtue of our consensus and mutual faith, since God calls together all of those who represent truth into one church, or better one synod. . . . We are one communal church (μία ἐκκλησία κοινοβιακή).”¹¹⁷ In fact, the lines of communication within his group of supporters worked quite differently. Apart from those few instances when monks were forced to interact with those outside their ranks, the mechanism for maintaining links between supporters was mainly through Theodore himself. Through his letters and messengers he was the heart and arteries of the support network, its grand communicator,¹¹⁸ while the network itself was more vertical than horizontal in its social structure. For information and directions supporters typically looked up to their leader, Theodore, rather than across to their neighbors.

Theodore’s views on the role of speaking and outspokenness in the various protests may be summed up as follows: Based on his reading of scripture, the abbot concluded that speaking out was a necessary and laudable action in times of trouble, while remaining silent incurred God’s anger. Two kinds of speaking out, though risky, were considered to be especially worthy, being in imitation of the saints: the first, the *parrhesia* of John the Baptist, was a sharp verbal protest in the face of the opposition; the second kind of *parrhesia* consisted of teaching, preaching, and exerting influence, actions frequently associated with John Chrysostom. Theodore applauded *parrhesia* when he encountered it and undertook this way of speaking in his own right, without however insisting on or encouraging it. For those who lacked the opportunity or will to exhibit *parrhesia* of any sort—the vast majority of his supporters, in fact—the abbot prescribed a third, less risky form of protest speech. To maintain contact with him personally, via letters, was reminiscent of the contacts between the apostle Paul and his fellow Christians. It too fulfilled the scriptural mandate on speech, it would seem, since it was the most the abbot demanded from most of his supporters.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing has been a fairly descriptive account of Theodore’s ideas about martyrdom (*martyrion*) and speaking out (*parrhesia*), from which any number of conclusions might be drawn. One line of interpretation would approach Theodore’s ideas quite literally, seeing them as the pragmatic directions of a spiritual father to his spiritual children. The concepts of martyrdom and speaking out change, in this view, as the abbot responds to the changing needs, capacities, and circumstances of his spiritual children in their pursuit of salvation.¹¹⁹ A different view of the matter sees, at least in the case of the abbot’s

¹¹⁷ *Letters*, 397 (d. 818), 552.

¹¹⁸ For the instances when supporters were referred to him by Stoudite monks, see *ibid.*, 206 (d. 816–817), 328–29; 232 (d. 815–818), 366–67; 331 (d. 816–818), 472; 59 (d. 821–826), 170–71. See also *ibid.*, 119 (d. 815), 237–38, where Theodore instructs Naukratios to inform him of people who would benefit from receiving a letter.

¹¹⁹ Two objections might be raised to this approach. First, it is not clear that all, or even most, of the abbot’s correspondents were his spiritual children proper. See, e.g., *Letters*, 139 (d. 816), 255–56; 142 (d. 815–816), 257–58; 390 (d. 818), 541–42; 551 (d. 821–826), 839–40. Should such initiatives be then called, in the strict sense, spiritual direction? Second, if spiritual direction was Theodore’s only motive, why use the language and stories of martyrdom and speaking out unless—as some scholars suppose—Byzantine letters such as

use of martyrdom, merely “un mot patristique bref qui devient une sorte de cliché,” the implication being that these concepts are so highly rhetorical as to need no further interpretation.¹²⁰ The same might be said of Theodore’s concept of speaking out, for here too he used a single concept to describe, endorse, and invoke a broad range of actions, some of them seemingly at odds with one another.

Both *martyrion* and *parrhesia* are clichés, of course,¹²¹ although not the sort that are typically associated with Byzantine epistolography.¹²² Indeed the fact that they are found so frequently imbedded in Theodore’s letters may point to an instantaneous modulation in the genre, a novel use of the letter that may suggest something about the “then meaning” of his letters as well as perhaps his intentions. The personal and persuasive touch of the Byzantine letter merged, in Theodore’s hands, with the moral and ethical imperatives of the sermon and hagiography.¹²³ To suggest that these are either mere spiritual directions or innocent clichés, on the other hand, fails to take account of the abbot’s skillful manipulation of language and traditions, while also overlooking the tremendous challenges he faced as the leader—spiritual, and otherwise—of an often uncertain group of supporters. When clichés and stories are universally recognizable and able to provoke emotions and actions, they too can have their uses when well told. Theodore, like other public figures before and after him, certainly recognized this fact.¹²⁴

That the abbot turned to *martyrion* and *parrhesia* in the first place suggests that these concepts were firmly rooted in the minds and hearts of his public, not to mention a regular part of public discourse. Sources from this period, however wanting, indicate the importance given to the concept of martyrdom, particularly during the second Iconoclast controversy.¹²⁵ There is less external evidence to suggest that *parrhesia* was a widely or

Theodore’s were not intended to convey clear information? Perhaps that was instead the responsibility of the messenger delivering directions orally. On this point, cf., F. X. Exler, *A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington, D.C., 1923), 69–77; G. Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, no. 17 (Turnhout, 1976), 53–55; M. Mullett, “Writing in Early Medieval Byzantium,” in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 181–82, 184.

¹²⁰ I. Hausherr, “Saint Théodore Studite. L’homme et l’ascète (d’après ses catéchèses),” *OCA* 6 (1926), 29.

¹²¹ But cf., for the concept of martyrdom, A. Kazhdan and A.-M. Talbot, “Women and Iconoclasm,” *BZ* 84/85.2 (1991/92) 400: “The most significant point, for our purposes, is that Theodore clearly views several of his women friends as saintly individuals, worthy of comparison with the female heroines and martyrs of the early church. . . . Yet none of these women achieved recognition by the church as saints.”

¹²² The bibliography on the Byzantine letter is vast. Cf. J. Sykutris, “Epistolographie,” *RE*, suppl. 5: 186–220; G. Karlsson, *Idéologie et cérémoniel dans l’épistolographie byzantine*, 2nd ed. (Uppsala, 1962); H. Hunger, “Epistolographie,” in *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I (Munich, 1978), 199–239; A. Littlewood, “An Ikon of the Soul: The Byzantine Letter,” *Visible Language* 10 (1976), 197–222; M. Mullett, “The Classical Tradition in the Byzantine Letter,” in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham, U.K., 1981), 75–93. Note St. Basil’s relatively sparse use of the language of martyrdom in his letters relative to that of Theodore. See R. Pouchet, *Basile le grand et son univers d’amis d’après sa correspondance: Une stratégie de communion*, *Studie Ephemeridis “Augustinianum,”* no. 36 (Rome, 1992), 761–66.

¹²³ On the “then meaning,” see M. Mullett, “The Madness of Genre,” *DOP* 46 (1992), 236–43 passim. On the letter as a vehicle for emotion, see eadem, “Classical Tradition,” 83, and “Writing,” 175–76; Littlewood, “Ikon of the Soul,” 222. For the view that in the first two controversies the personal becomes “political,” see Karlin-Hayter, “Saint Theodore,” 227–29.

¹²⁴ Cf. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford, 1991); Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, esp. 35–70.

¹²⁵ For the ideological uses of martyrdom in the early church, see Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, 81–101. For the Iconoclast controversy, see I. Ševčenko, “Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period,” in *Iconoclasm* (as above, note 16), esp. 129. See also the brief but tantalizing remarks of M.-F. Auzépy, “L’analyse littéraire et l’historien:

deeply held concept. The abbot touched off a bitter controversy by his usage of the term,¹²⁶ indicating that his opponents were at any rate concerned about its appeal. It is not too much to suppose, on the other hand, that he himself was responsible for dusting off and generating new interest in the long-neglected proof texts for civil disobedience in general, and *parrhesia* in particular.¹²⁷ And if the concept of *parrhesia* indeed lacked something in public thought and discourse prior to his day, Theodore made sure it would not remain so. With time he linked it closely with the idea of martyrdom, the two concepts becoming complementary and interchangeable. Both represented actions that would start the abbot's supporters on their road to salvation.

If *martyrdom* and *parrhesia* were thus potentially powerful concepts, the genius of Theodore was to make them actually so, bringing them within reach of his supporters. It is inviting to see him as one of the several prominent personalities of the age deeply concerned with a reinterpretation of the past, notably for the political advantages it afforded in the present. While some set to work on reinterpreting past history,¹²⁸ others' theological points,¹²⁹ and still others' past modes of visual imagery,¹³⁰ Theodore turned his attention to traditional explanations of salvation. His treatment of *martyrion* and *parrhesia*, both core concepts in that tradition, also had discernible political imprints. He grasped that the language and traditions of *martyrion* and *parrhesia* were powerful enough to serve as an effective means of exhortation and propaganda, yet flexible enough to be used as vehicles of inclusion.

To this extent the abbot may be charged with simplifying and perhaps confusing standard Christian discourse surrounding the terms *martyrion* and *parrhesia*—trafficking, in other words, in clichés. Yet flexibility was key, as Theodore presided over a group of supporters whose experience of the protests and persecutions varied considerably from person to person and from one time and place to the next. Persecutions visited some supporters and not others, and even among the persecuted, not all faced serious or enduring threats.¹³¹ The abbot's invocations to *martyrion* and *parrhesia* surrounded all of these supporters with images of noble suffering and self-sacrifice, and placed them on par with the outspoken saints and dying martyrs of the past. At the same time the technical parameters of *martyrion* and *parrhesia* that he set up were really more inclusive than the

l'exemple des vies de saints iconoclastes," *Byzantinoslavica* 53.1 (1992), 67. For the period after the first Iconoclast controversy, see eadem, "La destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalcé par Leo III: Propagande ou réalité?" *Byzantion* 60 (1990), 478–79, 489–90.

¹²⁶See above, note 33. On Chrysostom's use—the term is found about 500 times in his work, though not often in the sense explored here for Theodore—see Bartelink, "Quelques observations sur *Parresia*" (as above, note 53), esp. 442–45.

¹²⁷The abbot's apprehensions very early in his career about speaking out against authority, which in turn led him to study the matter and produce scriptural justifications, might suggest as much (see above, note 54). According to Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom" (as above, note 19), 76–83, the abbot would have much relevant civil disobedience literature to comb through.

¹²⁸Auzépy, "Chalcé," 444–92.

¹²⁹Cf. P. Alexander, "The Iconoclast Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definition (*Horos*)," *DOP* 7 (1953), 35–66; idem, "Church Councils and Patristic Authority: The Iconoclastic Councils of Hieria (754) and Saint Sophia (815)," *HSCPh* 63 (1958), 493–505A.

¹³⁰Cf. Cormack, "Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm" (as above, note 16), 40–41; J. Elsner, "Image and Iconoclasm in Byzantium," *Art History* 11.4 (December 1988), 471–91.

¹³¹See above, note 7.

images suggested. A variety of activities, from outright confrontations with authorities to utter retreat and seclusion, won his endorsement. In this way Theodore added ebb and flow to models of *martyrion* and *parrhesia* that were still relatively well-anchored in early Christian and patristic traditions, an ebb and flow that reflected not only the passage of time but also, one can conclude, the particular needs, concerns, and ultimately aims of his group of supporters.

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